

# DCFS Weekly Update From the State Office

Friday, November 17, 2000

## Testing Our Pulse

*By Richard Anderson*

You might be interested to find out what the overall response was to my e-mail message asking for help in putting a stop to any problems relating to retaliation and providing a more supportive atmosphere throughout our division. The first message I'd like to send is to all those who responded: Thank you, each one of you! There have been 20 of you to this point who have responded. Your messages were extremely relevant, well written, and responsibly supported in writing. Also, I have appreciated the e-mail exchanges we have had. I believe the responses received represent many others who chose not to respond both from the expressions of concerns and in positive comments, as some chose to respond with expressions of the positive experiences they are having in the division.

There were only a couple of specific requests for intervention from us. Most of the messages were information and perception sharing and requests for system changes such as: workload reviews (not just number of cases), staff turnover, etc. I am, continually, reviewing all of the responses to see where improvements are needed. I have given a brief overview of the messages to the State Administrative Team, while maintaining confidentiality of the respondents, as was promised. They responded appreciatively to the input. We will spend more time on details and will be working with regional administrations on the concerns and recommendations.

Responses continue to trickle in. Please feel free to respond if you would like to and haven't yet. This has been an effective personal exchange that has made for clearer perceptions about the overall atmosphere in the division. We really do care and want to know. I know the work is hard, and I appreciate all the good work that is done. We all want to help make things better. That was very clear in the messages I received. I appreciate your help.

## What's New at the Foundation?

*By Kelsey Lewis, Director of Recruitment*

Since the Utah Foster Care Foundation began recruitment efforts in September of 1999, over 2,000 prospective families have registered for pre-service training, over 900 prospective families have completed training, and 630 newly licensed families have entered the foster care system. Although the Foundation has helped to increase the number of new resource families, several foster families choose to leave the foster care system every month.

According to DCFS, the Foundation's recruitment efforts are not always resulting in the types of families needed to meet the placement needs of children in the foster care system. In an effort to improve upon the "quality" of the foster families that enter the system, a pilot program has been initiated to help prescreen prospective foster and adoptive families. After an initial phone conversation, Foundation Recruiters set up appointments to visit the homes of interested families. During this "initial



consultation” recruiters reinforce information that was initially provided over the phone and in a packet of information sent to the family.

This information details the types of children DCFS has in care and the current regional needs for families open to caring for categories of children with certain special needs, i.e. sibling groups, children who are medically fragile, teens, etc. The family's motivations for fostering and adopting, their willingness to interact with biological families, and their ability to work with challenging behaviors are all discussed. After the meeting, a summary of the visit is compiled.

Those families whose expectations and skills best fit regional needs are invited to training. Families whose expectations do not match well with the types of children DCFS currently has in custody are referred to private agencies or to other community service options.

While this program is currently being piloted only in Salt Lake, more detailed telephone interviews are being conducted in other regions. **Due to this change in procedure, foster and adoptive applications are no longer to be given out from any DCFS office. All offices are requested to refer any interested prospective foster or adoptive family to the Foundation.** This will help to streamline the recruitment, training, and licensing process as well as ensure that the most appropriate families are referred for training and licensing. Thanks for your help!

## Federal Regulation Changes Impact Foster Care

*By Cosette Mills, Federal Revenue Manager*

In the spring of 2000, the Administration for Children and Families issued new Federal Title IV-E regulations that impact foster care in Utah. For nearly eight months, DCFS administration has worked cooperatively with the Administrative Office of the Courts, State Office of the Attorney General, and DCFS eligibility workers to make plans for and implement the mandatory changes.

Through our combined efforts, Region Directors, Judges, and Attorney General staff have received information on the changes, new court orders have been drafted, eligibility procedures and forms have been revised, and eligibility workers in each region have been trained. The next critical step for implementation is to ensure that regional staff, particularly CPS workers and supervisors, foster care workers and supervisors, and resource family consultants understand and comply with these requirements.

In this article, and several more to follow, changes made in Federal Title IV-E foster care regulations are explained. Regional CPS teams, foster care teams, and resource family consultants are encouraged to review relevant requirements in team meetings. I recommend including the regional eligibility worker(s) in these discussions, if possible.

Most of the changes fall into four categories: (1) removal home, (2) court order requirements, (3) placement and licensure requirements, and (4) federal reviews. This article concludes with an explanation of the new removal home requirements.



## Removal Home

Determining Removal Home: When determining Title IV-E eligibility for a foster child, specific criteria has to be assessed based upon the child's "removal home."

Unfortunately, removal home for eligibility purposes doesn't always mean the home the child was actually removed from.

In previous regulations, the removal home was considered the home the child was actually removed from if it was the home of a parent or relative. If the foster child did not live with a parent or relative at the time of removal, the removal home was the home of the parent or relative with whom the child most recently lived. To qualify for Title IV-E, the child had to live in the parent or relative home within the six months prior to the month of the petition for custody or voluntary placement.

The new regulations have changed the definition of removal home. For Title IV-E eligibility purposes, the removal home is:

- The household of the persons from whom legal custody is taken, if a court ordered removal (i.e., who the court legally took custody away from when giving DCFS the responsibility for care and placement of the child). In most cases, this will be the child's parent(s). In a few circumstances, it may be a relative who has been given ongoing responsibility for the child, such as through a guardianship arrangement.
- For a child placed through a voluntary placement agreement or up-front relinquishment of parental rights, the removal home is the home of the parents placing the child with DCFS.

## Required Removal Home Information

- In order for eligibility workers to determine Title IV-E eligibility for foster care, the following information about the removal home must be submitted by the caseworker on the eligibility application:
- Name and phone number of person(s) from whom custody was taken;
- Relationship of those persons to the child;
- Date child last lived with those persons;
- Household members in the removal home, including relationship to child, date of birth, and Social Security numbers;
- Deprivation in the removal home (absence, disability, unemployment or limited employment of parents);
- Income and assets of household members, including receipt of public financial assistance;
- Child care expenses, if applicable; and
- Availability of health insurance coverage for the child.

For further information on Title IV-E eligibility, contact your regional eligibility worker.

**Note:** *I recognize that all of the "must do" requirements of law and regulations can be frustrating at times. I appreciate the diligent efforts made by DCFS staff to meet these difficult requirements. And though sometimes it may not seem likely, I am confident that federal and state law and regulations are written with the intent of ensuring safe and appropriate care for children and families.*



*In addition, while we wish it might be otherwise, the only way we can serve children and families is to have necessary funding. Title IV-E funding provides millions of dollars to DCFS each year to help pay for foster child placements and adoption assistance, and for staff salaries, fringe benefits, and other administrative and training costs.*

## To Make Your Life Easier...Using SAFE Optimally

*By Robert Lewis*

It's important that the entry of a case closure be done as quickly as possible once the decision is made to close the case. Benefits of prompt entry of case closures include: 1) more accurate case and caseload counts; and 2) reduced risk of liability to worker and agency if children are re-abused.

Offices should be able to complete the majority of their case closures within about seven calendar days from the end of services. Here is a list offices with no more than 20% of their case closures for July through September 2000 taking more than seven days:

<b>Office</b>	<b>Cases closed July through September 2000</b>	<b>Percent of closures requiring more than seven days to enter</b>
<b>Beaver</b>	4	0.0%
<b>Payson</b>	89	7.9%
<b>Blanding</b>	34	8.8%
<b>Roosevelt</b>	32	12.5%
<b>Cedar City</b>	178	13.5%
<b>Kanab</b>	7	14.3%
<b>Vernal</b>	71	15.5%
<b>Provo</b>	224	17.4%
<b>Murray</b>	35	20.0%

## The Salt Lake Valley Christmas Store

*By Misty Wise, Utah Foster Care Foundation, 801-994-5205*

The Utah Foster Care Foundation, Christmas Box International, and the Salt Lake County Children's Shelter are teaming up to carry on Lisa Canape's Christmas Store. This year the store will be from December 2 through December 23, 2000. All Salt Lake Valley foster children, adopted children, biological children, AND their foster parents are invited to shop at the store. Hours are Monday through Friday 10am to 4pm, and Saturdays from 10am to 7pm. The store is located at 908 West 4800 South in Murray. It is a two-story home that has been donated by a real estate agent. All items in the store are new: clothes, toys, books, games, and gifts for moms and dads, stockings, candy, etc.

SALT LAKE VALLEY CASEWORKERS ARE INVITED TO THE CHRISTMAS STORE THE WEEK OF DECEMBER 18 THROUGH THE 23, 2000. If you have children that need Sub-4-Santa projects, please encourage their foster parents to pick out what they would like at the Christmas Store. We encourage you to come the final week the store is open because we will be receiving "Giving Tree" gifts from several valley malls—meaning a whole new supply of new gifts will be delivered!



Currently, we are discussing a point system to regulate the quantity of gifts that one individual can take: we are talking about 500 points per child/individual (i.e., if you have three children in your caseload that need gifts, you would receive 500 points per child, totaling 1500 points). We are not sure how much inventory we will have this year as all new items are coming in, so items are available while supplies last. If you have any questions, please let me know.

## **Clarification to Article Entitled, “Standards for Out-of-Home Care Case Creation”**

*By Caren Frost*

An article entitled “Standards for Out-of-Home Care Case Creation” was included in the Weekly Update of October 27, 2000. It has since come to my attention that additional clarification is needed about the “case start date.” The following language needs to be included at the end of that article: “People need to use the ‘temporary custody date’ as the case start date when opening an SCF case.”

Please feel free to contact Abel Ortiz or me if you have any questions about this clarification. Thank you for your attention to this matter.